

The two truths

The proponents of the Svatantrika School maintain that emptiness, i.e. the lack of true existence of a phenomenon, is an ultimate truth, whereas everything else that exists (and that is not an emptiness) is a conventional truth. The *lack of true existence* of a car, for example, is an ultimate truth, while *the car* itself is a conventional truth. Hence, whatever is an ultimate truth is necessarily emptiness, whereas whatever is a phenomenon other than emptiness is necessarily a conventional truth

Yet according to the Prasangika School, whatever is an ultimate truth is not necessarily emptiness since both emptiness and cessations (of any of the obstructions) are ultimate truths. For instance, the elimination of intellectually acquired afflictive obstructions in the continuum of a Bodhisattva on the path of seeing is an ultimate truth. Thus, whatever is an emptiness or a cessation is necessarily an ultimate truth and is directly perceived by meditative equipoise paths, whereas whatever exists and is neither an emptiness nor a cessation is necessarily a conventional truth.

	Ultimate truths	Conventional truths
Madhyamika Svatantrika	Whatever is an emptiness is necessarily an ultimate truth	Whatever exists that is not an emptiness is necessarily a conventional truth
Madhyamika Prasangika	Whatever is an emptiness or a cessation is necessarily an ultimate truth	Whatever exists that is neither an emptiness nor a cessation is necessarily a conventional truth

This completes the brief presentation of some of the tenets of the Svatantrika.

Next follows the description of the path of meditation that is given in the commentaries on the *Ornament*.

Haribhadra says in his *Commentary Clarifying the Meaning*:

"[For example] since the conditioned [truth of the path] and the unconditioned [cessation which is an attribute of the truth of the path] are of one nature, they cannot be realized to be [of a] mutually different [nature]. Likewise, since the phenomenon [Dharmata, i.e. emptiness], which is directly perceived by the path of seeing explained above, is not different [from the Dharmata which is directly] observed [by the path of meditation], paths of seeing and meditation are not of a different [type]."

Gyaltsab je says in his *Ornament of the Essence*:

"Subhuti, it is not possible to impute a permanent sphere onto a non-existent impermanent sphere...' these words [from a sutra] give instructions on the tenth topic, the path of meditation, by way of an example because they teach that one meditates on the path of meditation as an antidote to the innate objects of elimination (i.e. innate obstructions).

[This is explained by means of two outlines]

1. The nature of the path that is the object of meditation
2. Refuting others' arguments

1. *The nature of the path that is the object of meditation*

It is not possible to present an actual uncontaminated path of meditation that is of a different type than the path of seeing which directly realizes Dharmata [i.e. emptiness/the real nature of phenomena], because the path of seeing and the path of meditation are both absorbed in Dharmata and not of different types. They are not of different types because of the following:

[For example] if the conditioned [i.e. impermanent] truth of the path that directly realizes selflessness and the unconditioned [i.e. permanent] freedom from the seeds of defilement [i.e. a truth of cessation, which is an attribute of that truth of the path] were of a different nature, then [the truth of the path] would not be free of those [seeds of] defilement. Therefore, [the truth of the path and its elimination of the seeds of defilement] are of one nature and one is not able to [correctly] impute them to be mutually of a different nature. Likewise, Dharmata, the phenomenon which is directly perceived by the path of seeing explained above, is not different from [the Dharmata] which is directly observed by the path of meditation. The Dharmata [that is the object of the path of seeing and of the path of meditation] is not a different aspect in terms of the nature [of emptiness]. Thus, the two earlier and later paths [i.e. the path of seeing and the path of meditation] that are both absorbed in [emptiness] do not have different aspects in terms of the nature [of emptiness]. Both [the path of seeing and the path of meditation] negate the main object of the innate [ignorance] that grasps at true existence. That [lack of true existence] is directly observed by both [paths]. However it must be

understood that [the path of seeing and the path of meditation] eradicate different superimpositions which are their objects of eradication [i.e. the path of seeing eradicates intellectually acquired superimpositions and the path of meditation innate superimpositions].

Someone from the past says: "Although the meditative equipoise paths of the ten bhumis do not differ with respect to the perception of Dharmata, there are differences in the perception of the truth body [i.e. truths of cessation]." [Our response is:] If one asserts that a truth of cessation (an elimination of any of the obstructions) is an ultimate truth, then [the statement] makes sense. But if one asserts that it is a conventional truth, a practitioner's exalted wisdom directly realizing Dharmata would explicitly comprehend a conventional truth. This transgresses logic because it would absurdly follow that a practitioner's meditative equipoise paths and subsequent attainment paths are of one nature. It would follow that [practitioners] have completely eliminated the defilement of perceiving the two truths as being of a different nature. And there would not be the slightest fault in a Bodhisattva having brought about the perfect end without having completed [prayers], ripened [sentient beings], and purified [his Buddha field].

2. *Refuting others' arguments*

Someone says: 'If those two paths [the uninterrupted path of the path of seeing and the uninterrupted path of the path of meditation] do not have different characteristics, then there is no difference either with regard to their ability to eliminate the objects of elimination.'

[Our response is:] Indeed, the two are not different in type [with regard to directly realizing emptiness]. However, it is not the case that they are not different with regard to their ability to eliminate the objects of elimination (i.e. obstructions) because, while the seeds of the innate [objects of elimination] are not eliminated by the former path (the path of seeing), that later path (the path of meditation), through the force of having greatly nurtured familiarization [with emptiness] compared to the former [and] through the nature of dependent arising is able to abandon the seeds of the innate [objects of elimination]. For example, even though an inferential valid cognizer [conceptually] realizing that sound is impermanent realizes the non-existence of the object of adherence of the innate conception of sound as permanent, it harms the intellectually acquired [objects of elimination]; it does not harm the innate [objects of elimination].

Lama Tsongkhapa says in his **Golden Rosary**:

"What is the subject-matter [of the instructions]? [The subject-matter] is the path of meditation. The way [in which the instructions are given]: [The instructions are given] by way of teaching: 'Meditate thoroughly on that path of meditation, the direct antidote to the [innate] objects of elimination.'

Someone says: 'Well then, if one has to meditate on the two antidotes, the path of seeing and the path of meditation, which have different objects of elimination, is there also a difference with regard to [the two paths'] mode of realization of Dharmata?'

[Our response is:] An authentic path of meditation that differs from the path of seeing in its mode of realization of Dharmata cannot be presented. The reason for this is that the path of seeing and the path of meditation are not different nor without differences with regard to the mode of realization of Dharmata. The path of meditation observes only Dharmata which is not different from the phenomenon, the Dharmata, directly perceived by the aforementioned path of seeing dir. The path of meditation also merely familiarizes with Dharmata.

For example, the conditioned truth of the path and the unconditioned truth of cessation are of one nature and not of a different nature.

Therefore, one is not able to [correctly] impute them as being [of a] different [nature], independent of one another. This is a concordant example of the former pervasion.

Moreover, this example [is stated] in the Sutra: 'Subhuti, in the absence of a conditioned (i.e. impermanent) sphere, one is unable to impute an unconditioned (i.e. permanent) sphere, and in the absence of an unconditioned sphere one is also unable to impute a conditioned sphere.'

That is applied as the reason for teaching the path of meditation by way of an example. Thus, since the conditioned path and the unconditioned cessation are of one nature, and not of a different nature, one is unable to posit them separately as being independent of one another. Likewise, the path of meditation is posited as familiarizing with that which is perceived by the path of seeing; it is not posited as something other.

Someone says: 'Well then, is there also no difference with regard to [what the path of seeing and path of meditation] eliminate, since there is no difference with regard to [what they] realize?'

[Our response is:] There is no difference with regard to [both paths] realizing Dharmata, yet the path of seeing is unable to eliminate the objects of elimination of the path of meditation, whereas the path of meditation is able to [eliminate them]. This is due to the nature of dependent arising. For instance, even though there is no difference between former and later water, still earlier water cannot clean something which later water can; this is due to the nature of things.

